

# POSITION STATEMENT



## Billboard Advertising and Sexualised Images

**Bravehearts**  
Educate Empower Protect  
Our Kids

The sexualised images of young girls and women are used extensively in mass media, advertising and entertainment mediums. The hyper-sexualisation and objectification of young girls as well as the hyper-masculinisation of boys perpetuate and reinforce each other as unrealistic ideals and can have devastating consequences on their psycho-sexual development.

Advertising is a medium that is used extensively to promote a product or service. The purpose of billboard advertising is that it is designed to attract attention and placed in a location where it is highly visible. As with other forms of advertising an individual is unable to ‘turn it off’ or ‘turn it down’ and is therefore considered intrusive and unavoidable.

The Australian Senate<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> and the House of Representatives<sup>3</sup> have conducted enquiries into sexualisation of children in media billboard advertising and provided the industry with recommendations with no effective result. The WA Government found in their Submission on the Regulation of Billboard and Outdoor Advertising that inappropriate sexualisation of children in advertising is on the increase and of a real concern. Most Government recommendations support all billboard or public advertising should carry a ‘G’ rating.

The regulation of advertising on billboards is covered by the advertising industry through self-regulation and with very little impact. Complainants advise that it can take months for a complaint lodged with the Advertising Standards Board to be resolved and the advertiser is not legally or legislatively bound to accommodate any decision made by them.



*Bold Billboard: the advertisement seen from Beaudesert Road at the Salisbury overpass. Source: Quest Newspapers*

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<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth Parliament, Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and the Arts, Inquiry into Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media (2008)

<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth Parliament, Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee, Review of the National Classification Scheme: Achieving the right balance (June 2011)

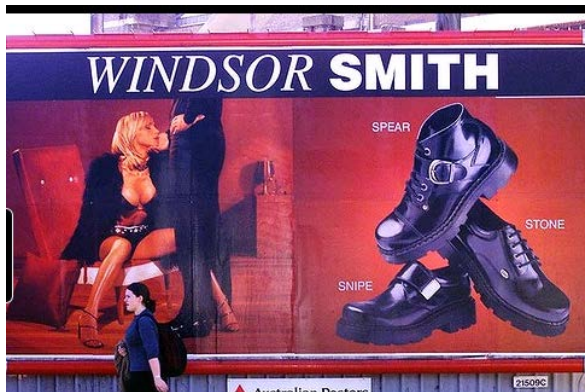
<sup>3</sup> Commonwealth Parliament, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, Report of an Inquiry into Regulation of Billboard and Outdoor Advertising (July 2011)



The "Want longer lasting sex?" billboards were ordered to be taken down by the Advertising Standards Bureau in 2008 <http://www.news.com.au/business/the-most-complained-about-ads-of-the-past-decade/story-e6frfm1i-1226240748206#ixzz2Mtt7nnT3>



<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/photogallery/queensland/controversial-billboards-you-be-the-judge-20111011-1lj39.html?selectedImage=0>



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All of the mentioned Government Enquiries have provided recommendations for the billboard advertising industry to introduce more control and regulation but to date it appears the Advertising Standards Board is nothing more than a 'toothless tiger' advocating on behalf of advertisers. Their *Code for Advertising & Marketing Communications to Children* is flimsy to say the least and provides very little direction.

A report commission by the UK Government on the sexualisation of young people <sup>4</sup> found the psychological impact on young people can distort their perception as to what is socially acceptable. The report provided an evidential link between those who have been exposed to 'sexual callousness' and hyper-sexualisation and objectification of both genders to violence. Numerous reports expound the effect of sexually objectifying either gender and how it can contribute to body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, low self-esteem, depressive affect, and even physical health problems in high-school-aged girls and in young women <sup>5</sup> Prolonged exposure to this imagery could increase the likelihood of an individual consuming material that depicts images that can be classified as harmful or sexual behaviours which could be classified as extreme.

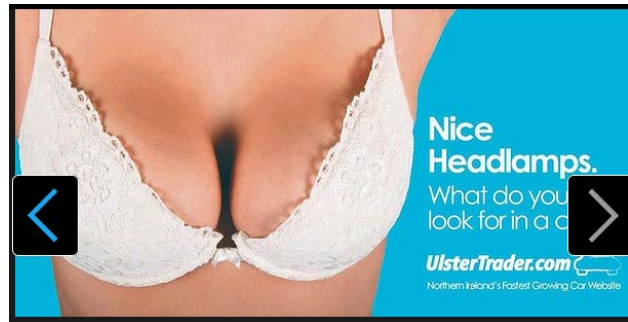
At the far end of the scale of female and male hyper-sexualisation, masculinisation and objectification there is child sexual abuse. The depiction of a young child dressed provocatively as an adolescent is an open invitation for exploitation by predators. Bravehearts recognises the right of advertisers to promote their products providing they are aware that the viewing audience is diverse in age.

<sup>4</sup> <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/sexualisation%20of%20young%20people%20review.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf>

Sexual curiosity is a normal feature of childhood and we need to provide children with the tools to deal with sexual content safely and successfully. This would mean that all forms of advertising mediums need to be presented to children in a realistic format, with non-exploitative representations of gender and sexuality which will ensure that they develop a healthy emotional and sexual reference that is pivotal to gender equality.

Bravehearts believes that it is now time for the community to demand that there is a legislative requirement and regulation for the classification of billboard advertising that will meet community and social expectations. Pressure needs to be placed on Australian Federal Government and State Governments to impose reforms and we look to you, the community for support. You have the power to make the Government enforce these regulations and ask that you ring your local, State and Federal representatives to voice your concerns.



<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/photogallery/queensland/controversial-billboards-you-be-the-judge-20111011-1lj39.html?selectedImage=0>



*The Sexpo billboard on Brisbane Street at Dinmore*  
Read more: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/sexpo-billboard-too-sexy-for-ipswich-20100203-nbiw.html#ixzz2Mu1FM1Yv>



Bravehearts Foundation Limited  
ABN: 41 496 913 890 ACN: 607 315 917  
PO Box 575, Arundel BC, Qld 4214  
Phone 07 5552 3000 Email [research@bravehearts.org.au](mailto:research@bravehearts.org.au)  
Information & Support Line 1800 272 831  
[bravehearts.org.au](http://bravehearts.org.au)

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